

National Hate Crimes Hotline Act of 2009 aimed at increased reporting and responsiveness for hate crimes     ***New hotline aimed at increased reporting and responsiveness for hate crimes***

Washington, DC – Thursday, Reps. Steve Israel (D-NY), José E. Serrano (D-NY) and Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) announced the introduction of the National Hate Crimes Hotline Act of 2009.

“When a hate crime occurs, it’s not simply an offense against an individual, but an offense against an entire community. And all too often, victims are so intimidated that they don’t report these heinous crimes,” said Rep. Israel. “Today, we are introducing the National Hate Crimes Hotline Act. Our goal is to give victims a safe way to report hate crimes and get help. With better reporting, we can provide a better response.”

“Today we take a step toward guaranteeing that hate crimes do not go unreported and unpunished,” said Rep. Serrano. “Our bill will help ensure that all victims of hate crimes feel comfortable in reporting them, and will provide new resources to combat and respond to hate crimes in communities across the nation. These new tools will help make our communities safer, and will continue the fight against these atrocious crimes.”

“Far too many victims silently bear the burden of the crimes committed against them, which is why we are taking steps to provide a place for them to be heard. A National Hate Crimes Hotline would allow New Yorkers and victims across the country to safely report to the police and find vital assistance. In addition, accurate reporting will improve local responsiveness, increase prevention efforts and help bring an end to these heinous acts,” said Rep. Velázquez.

“The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community experiences hate-crimes far too often, and CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers stands in full support of implementing this initiative to help all of our communities. This legislation will provide the vital mechanisms to help support victims of hate-crimes, facilitate reporting, and ensure that linkages to services are provided to all victims,” said Guido A. Sanchez, National Manager of Membership & Development for CenterLink.

The hotline is modeled after the National Domestic Violence Hotline, with a goal of increasing both the reporting of and local responsiveness to hate crimes. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has fielded more than 2 million calls since its launch in 1996.

The National Hate Crimes Hotline Act of 2009:

- Establishes a national, toll-free telephone service where victims of hate crimes can call to find counseling, mental health and physical health services in their area, as well as anonymously report hate crimes to the police;
- Provides funds to state and local law enforcement if they fully comply with the reporting requirements of the Hate Crimes Statistics Act; and

- Creates a grant program for community based non-profits and faith-based organizations to provide services for victims of hate crimes in areas that currently lack resources.

A 2005 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), based on an analysis of 3.5 years of data gathered from the National Crime Victimization Survey, found an average of 191,000 hate crimes occurred annually over the time frame examined, with only 43 percent of these crimes reported to police. Reasons for not reporting vary, but include language barriers, perceived futility, and the fear of discovery of immigration status.

In addition, the BJS statistics indicated that the number of hate crimes occurring is 19 to 31 times higher than the number recorded in the FBI database. While the FBI is required to track hate crime statistics, it does not require state agencies to report them, causing for major discrepancies in the number of crimes reported per state.

According to an FBI report from October 2008, there were 595 incidents of anti-Hispanic hate crimes in 2007, an increase of 3.3% from the 576 incidents reported in 2006.

According to an annual Hate Crime Statistics Report released jointly by the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2,025 law enforcement agencies reported 7,624 hate crime incidents involving 9,006 offenses in 2007 (the most recent year for which reporting is available). Additionally, an analysis of the 7,621 single-bias incidents reported in 2007 revealed the following:

- 50.8 percent were racially motivated
- 18.4 percent were motivated by religious bias
- 16.6 percent resulted from sexual-orientation bias
- 13.2 percent stemmed from ethnicity/national origin bias